

# The Briefing



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## Why do we pray for others?

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Learning to pray for others is one of the first things we learn as Christians: we see it commended on every other page of the New Testament; we see it modelled in every other meeting of Christians we participate in; and Christian parents model it to their children from birth.

Have you ever stopped to think about *why* we pray for others, however? Or why we ask prayer from others? I was made to really consider the question when I first read through [2 Corinthians 1 \(https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%201\)](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%201). And what the Apostle Paul says there continues to provoke me to thought and wonder every time I read it.

More of that passage in a moment; but I guess, at the most basic level, we pray for our friends because we love them. We desire their good, we desire their growth: we desire their conversion and conformity to Christ. And what more loving thing is there to do than to pray to the one who loves us with a love beyond our ability to conceive, a love that is accompanied *by the ability to do it, and which nothing can thwart*? Praying for others is more than just the best thing to do when I can't do any more for them—a last option for love when all other options are exhausted—it is *always* the best thing to do for them (though not the only, of course!).

It ought come as no surprise, therefore, that Jesus calls on us to pray not just for our friends, but also for our enemies, *since we are called to love our enemies too*: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate

your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” ([Matthew 5:43-44](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matthew%205.43-44) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matthew%205.43-44>)).

Further, it should come as no surprise (yet so often it does, given our fallen minds), for the reason Jesus gives for loving (our enemies, no less!) with prayer is: “so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” ([Matthew 5:45](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matthew%205.45) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matthew%205.45>)). If we are the children of God, then we need to live that out. And as we look at Jesus, the Son of God—our adoptive brother—we see one who died in love for his enemies (us), and whose life is in love characterized by prayer for others: in his earthly ministry, in the Garden before he died, on the cross, and now in heaven itself, where ‘he always lives to make intercession for them’ ([Hebrews 7:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hebrews%207.25) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hebrews%207.25>)).

More so, within the Trinitarian life of God, the Spirit too intercedes for us ([Romans 8:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Romans%208.27) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Romans%208.27>)). The one true and living God, who is love, is the God who prays for others. And so, as the children of God, in whom his Spirit dwells, we too are characterized by prayer for others.

Prayer is more than just love for our neighbour, however. *Understood properly, prayer is love for God.* For in prayer we acknowledge and rightly express both his place as the sovereign creator of this world, and our place as those who trust him in all things. In prayer we trustingly live out the reality that all good things come from his hand, that our lives are in his hands, that all things happen in conformity with the purpose of his will. Praying for others is as much about giving God the power and glory that are his, as it is about loving our neighbour.

This is made most abundantly clear to me every time I read [2 Corinthians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Corinthians%201.11) (<https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Corinthians%201.11>): “You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.” Did you notice how God-centred (‘theocentric’) Paul’s request for prayer is? He wants people to pray for him so that, when the prayers are answered, there will be *many* people to give thanks to God. *Paul’s desire for prayer from the Corinthians is not just for thanksgiving, but for the **multiplication** of thanksgiving.*

For what reason do we pray for others? For what reason do we ask for prayer? Is it because we love them? Is it because we love God, and want to spread the praise and thanks around, to *magnify* his name?

In a way, prayer letters make it easier to do this, since they tend to spell out answers to prayer and points for thanks. If it’s not your habit to do this, however, can I suggest that your Bible-study group, as well as you yourself personally, develop a ‘prayer diary’ that can be reviewed, so that the prayers prayed in weeks previous can be remembered, and given thanks for when they are answered? If you lead prayers at church, to occasionally ask not just for prayer points, but for answered-prayer points?

As for me, as I’ve written this I’ve realized the danger of my current system: my prayer diary will fill up with friends and family, but my enemies are conspicuously absent. Pray for me, that I’d learn to pray well for my enemies, and give thanks when the prayer is answered.

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